

# TOP SCORE NEWSLETTER

Fall, 1986 • For Members of the Amusement Players Association • \$2.00

## 1986 "MASTERS" TOURNAMENT DRAWS RECORD CROWDS

### Over 1,500 compete for Guinness recognition

During the last weekend of June, video game players from across the continental United States gathered at local **Bally's Aladdin's Castle** amusement centers to participate in the **1986 Video Game Masters Tournament**.

The fourth edition of this prestigious event (which was co-sponsored by the **U.S. National Video Game Team**, **Bally's Aladdin's Castles, Inc.**, and the **March of Dimes Foundation**) featured play on over 125 different video games. The game selection represented a broad variety of both current and classic hits, so that everyone could participate on a favorite machine.

The **Guinness Book of World Records**, the internationally renowned book of extraordinary facts and figures, once again pledged to print all video game high scores that exceeded previously published records. And although thousands of new scores were tracked during the three-day competition, by more than 1,500 registered players (up from approximately 500 in 1985), only the top scores have seen their way into the Guinness Book's 1987 edition.



Goodwill was greatly emphasized during the **1986 Video Game Masters Tournament**. Half of every player's entry fee was donated to the **March of Dimes Foundation** to help them in their fight against birth defects. Nearly **\$4,000** was raised by the event to help benefit this worthy cause.

The **1986 Video Game Masters Tournament** attracted a wide array of different players. A surprising number of women competed (with three claiming records), yet they still made up only 3.4% of the total participants. Although the age of the players ranged from 5 to 70, the average age was 20.5. The average age of the female players was slightly higher: 21.6. The state with the most participants was **Texas**, while the state that pulled in the highest number of world record scores was **California** with 20.

And, as the organizers actively plan next year's tournament, players are reflecting on the 1986 contest. Taking time out of their intense

practice sessions, the following champions gave us their opinions of the 1986 Video Game Masters Tournament:

**Mark Alpiger** of Louisville, Kentucky took home the **Crystal Castles** title with an impressive 881,306 (a score that he's already smashed with his incredible 891,221). Mark felt that this year's competition was the best ever and he was encouraged by the record turnout. "I liked the **1986 Video Game Masters Tournament** a lot," he told us, "and I loved the opportunity of being able to play almost anywhere."

**Donn Nauert**, a resident of Austin, Texas who journeyed to Iowa City, Iowa to compete, also enjoyed the competition. "I've played in several national video game contests over the past two years, but I feel that the **1986 Video Game Masters Tournament** was the best yet. It was

*...I loved the opportunity of being able to compete almost anywhere...*

tough going against 1,500 other players, but at least I knew that if I got a record it would be the record," he commented.

Down in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, **Jerry Macaluso** explained his reasons for playing. "The **Masters** competition allowed me to exhibit my video game skills to the rest of the players. It gives you a chance to brag without being egotistical."

Although Jerry didn't make it into the **Guinness Book of World Records**, many others did. **Mark Alpiger**, a veteran of the 1985 contest, was "very satisfied" with his performance (wouldn't you be if you could score 881,221 on **Crystal Castles**?). "The contest atmosphere was great," he said. "I was able to top my personal record every day of the tournament."

"This year's contest was great!" exclaimed **U.S. National Video Game Team** representative **Steve Harris**. "The participation was incredible and the scores were truly world-class. **Bally's Aladdin's Castle** did an excellent job of administering spirit among the players."

By the time you read this, the 1987 edition of the **Guinness Book of World Records** should already be on the shelves; displaying the talents of over a hundred of the world's leading players. Check it out and start playing those games! Be sure that you're ready for the **1987 Video Game Masters Tournament** when it begins on June 26, 1987. See you there!

### ATARI GAMES ANNOUNCES GAUNTLET II CONTEST

**Atari Games** has announced that they will sponsor a special competition to coincide with the release of their new adventure sequel, **Gauntlet II**.

Unlike most video game give-aways, Atari's **Players Quest Contest** requires participants to use puzzle-solving strategy as well as their gaming skills. By using clues given during various points in play, you must locate the secret rooms hidden within the game's 100+ levels, achieve the specific goal outlined at the beginning of the round, and exit before the limited amount of time expires.

Those who are lucky enough to get in and out of a secret room are given a special, personalized six-digit code number. This secret number should then be mailed to Atari for verification, and, if authentic, is placed with the names of other players who have successfully navigated the secret rooms. On January 5, 1987, six names will be drawn and winners announced.

### OVER \$12,000 IN PRIZES

Those six lucky adventurers will win a pocketful of money for their talents — a portion of the more than \$12,000 worth of prizes Atari is awarding. Winners will have their choice of a savings bond or cash. Either way, it's certainly not a bad investment!

In addition to the above prizes, Atari will be giving away **Players Quest Contest** T-shirts to the first 500 legitimate entries.

Players should contact their local arcades for more information about **Gauntlet II** and the exciting **Players Quest Contest**. But hurry! All entries must be postmarked no later than December 19, 1986, to be eligible for the drawing.

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

\*\*\*\*\* Competitions \*\*\*\*\*

August 1 - December 19, 1986

### Atari's Gauntlet II Players Quest Contest

Open to all players at all locations that have Gauntlet II. Free T-Shirts to first 500 winners with a special drawing January 5, 1987 to award grand prize: a portion of a \$12,000 purse.

January 2-4, 1987

### APA/U.S. National Video Game Team North American Tournament of Champions

Annual invitational crowns the top video game players, games, magazines, and manufacturers of 1986. Invitations will be sent to 100 pre-selected players.

## TOP SCORE NEWSLETTER

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FALL, 1986

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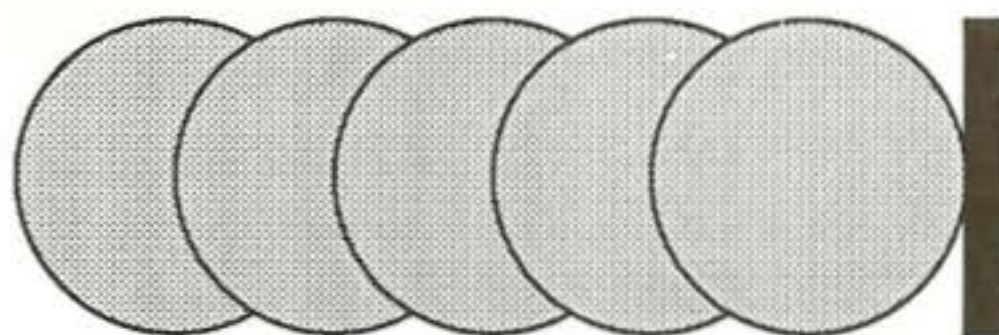
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# INSERT COIN

Greetings,

Welcome to the premier issue of **Top Score**, the official publication of the **Amusement Players Association**. **Top Score**, like the **APA**, is for YOU, the arcade and home game player and enthusiast. Whether you are a casual player or a devoted expert; enjoy pinball or video games, this newsletter is for you!

In each issue of **Top Score** you'll find all the latest news and developments from within the electronic amusement industry. We'll take you **Behind the Screens** to visit some of the leading video game manufacturers and talk to the actual programmers of some of today's hottest new games.

We'll introduce you to some of the best video game and pinball players in the world with our in-depth **Player Profiles**. You'll meet the truly elite, world-class players, and discover how they achieved their success.

Want more? You've got it! We'll take you into one of our **'Cades**, where we look at some of the most popular arcades in the world and examine the players who frequent them.

Also featured in this and every issue of **Top Score**, are **Strategy Sessions**. We enlist the aid of top game players to bring you helpful and intriguing tips to help you improve your gaming skills.

**Top Score** will also present reviews of the best new games as well as high scores on both the most recent game releases and your favorite classics. You'll find tournament information, trivia contests, and a whole lot more!

This newsletter is the result of many enjoyable hours of preparation. As we expand in the future, expect to see more feature articles, game reviews, and **APA** sponsored competitions. Write and let me know what you think of **Top Score** and in which direction we should expand. Most importantly, however, join the **Amusement Players Association** and get your friends to join. Your involvement will insure the continued success of the **APA** and allow us to bring you more tournaments and gaming news.

I hope that you enjoy this issue of **Top Score**. May all your scores be the tops!

Sincerely

Perry Rodgers  
Editor

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# Gaming Gossip. . .

The doors to the 37th annual **Amusement and Music Operators Association's** exposition of music and games will open November 6th in downtown **Chicago**. This convention, which is held every year for arcade and game owners, showcases the latest new innovations and previews the pinball and video game machines that will appear in the months to come. Members of the **U.S. National Video Game Team** will be at the show and file a complete report in the next issue of **Top Score**. . . **Nintendo of America**, the maker of such hit games as **Hogan's Alley** and **Excitebike**, has announced that they have sold over 20,000 **Super Mario Bros.** units — an all-time high for their interchangeable VS. System. . . Do you have an opinion on a new game or a question you'd like to ask a game company? Send your questions to: **APA, P.O. Box 1558, Torrance, CA 90505**. We'll make sure they get them. . . Did you know that in the original version of **Centipede** there was a grasshopper in addition to the centipede, fleas, spiders, and scorpions in the final version. You can still see the little critter in the test mode. . . Look for more **APA** sponsored tournaments in the future! Currently in the planning are a series of state competitions to crown state champions, and arcade vs. arcade playoffs. More details to come. . . The results of the survey that was enclosed with this issue of **Top Score** will be used to determine this year's **APA Players Choice Awards**. . . Every see a **Puc-Man** or maybe a **Kung-Fu Champ**? These are just two examples of illegally produced video games made by unauthorized companies. These outlaws try to cash in on popular themes by making their own illegal versions. All games are potential targets, and playing an altered copy game is against the law, so check and make sure the machines you play are legitimate. . . Comeback for the lasers? **Malibu Grand Prix** has obtained the exclusive rights to a new laser disc game called **Freedom Fighter**. This spy-themed video employs an advanced laser disc technology that enables the player to interact more than previous laser releases. . . Speaking of lasers, what ever happened to **Dragon's Lair II**? This sequel to the first (and we think best) laser disc offering was completed, but never saw its way into the arcades. **DL II** featured a time machine which placed the hero **Dirk**, in some very amusing situations. It probably would have been quite a hit. . . Did you know that the longest play on one coin is 94½ hours! This incredible feat of stamina and skill was accomplished over a period of five days by 19 year old **Brian King** at the **Palladium** in Durham, North Carolina. His final score: a whopping, **348,691,675**. . . With his powerful magic, **Merling the Wizard** is the strongest of the **Gauntlet** characters. . . Check out the movie **Nightmares**. One segment has **Emilio Estevez** battling a real live video game entitled the **Bishop of Battle**. When **Emilio** reaches the 13th level, however, the game gets its revenge. . . 1987 will undoubtedly be the year of the new **Home Gaming Revolution!** Three companies: **Atari**, **Nintendo**, and **Sega** all have unveiled new home video game systems. **Atari's** new **7800** will use a revolutionary new "Maria" chip to provide

enhanced graphics clarity. **Nintendo's** new system, a best-seller in Japan (over 1,000,000 units sold), will bring the excitement of their hit arcade games to the home, with play that is virtually identical. Besides the standard unit, there is an optional gun attachment (for their shooting contests like **Duck Hunt** and **Hogan's Alley**) and a robot that actually plays the games with you! **Sega's** unit, meanwhile, has the ability to play two types of cartridges, including one the size of a credit card. **Sega's** system will also have an assortment of peripherals to choose from, including a light gun, joystick, and a "sports" controller that features rapid-fire and a track-ball. Since these new home systems are being produced by arcade manufacturers (with the exception of **Atari**) there should be plenty of familiar game titles to keep players busy after the arcades have closed for the night. . . Want to know a trick on **Atari's Crystal Castles**? Get the bowling balls trapped on the first maze and jump 27 times in the lower right corner. After you've done this, finish the maze and you'll get a surprise on the next screen. . . **Atari's** new offering, **Road Runner**, was originally going to be a laser disc game. . . The **U.S. National Video Game Team** is interested in the thoughts and opinions of those of you who competed in the **1986 Video Game Masters Tournament**. Your letters will be passed on to **Bally's Aladdin's Castle** and the **Guinness Book of World Records** and might end up in the pages of the next issue of **Top Score**. . . Until next time, fight like a robot and avoid Indestructible Hulks. . .



DEDICATED  
TO SERVING  
THE COIN-OP  
AMUSEMENT  
INDUSTRY

## WIN \$100.00 Top Score Video Game Trivia Contest

Think you know a lot about video games? Fortune may await those of you who do in this special **Top Score** contest open to members of the **Amusement Players Association**.

Remember that little yellow ball that took the world by storm a few years ago? You know, that guy who ate dots and fruit and occasionally some of the spooks that constantly game chase? That's right, **Pac-Man!** Well, as you know, the **Pac-Man** family has grown steadily since then, in fact it's so large we can't remember all the different game names. We need your help.

If you can name all of the legal coin-operated video games (no **Puc-Man** or **Puke-Man**) that featured the **Pac-Man** character prominently, you could win 100 big ones.

To help, we're offering three clues: 1) There are 9 game titles in all; 2) One of the games is half pinball, half video; and 3) One of the games does not have "Pac" in its title.

Send your entry on a postcard to:

Top Score Trivia Contest  
P.O. Box 1558  
Torrance, California 90505

All entries must be received by December 15, 1986. In the event of two or more correct submissions, a winner will be drawn at random by an appointed representative of the APA. All decisions of the judges and the APA are final. Employees of the APA are not eligible.

VOID WHERE PROHIBITED BY LAW



# BEHIND THE SCREENS

AT

ATARI  
GAMES

**Atari Games**, located within the computer-rich silicon valley of Milpitas, California, is among the fore-runners of today's video game manufacturers. Recently, members of our staff made an on-site visit to Atari Games to talk with the game designers and programmers to find out how Atari produces arcade mega-hits like **Star Wars**, **Paperboy**, and **Gauntlet**. We met with game designers Dave Ralston and Mike Hally, software engineer Ed Logg, and marketing director Mary Fujihara. Thanks to their interest in educating today's players, they let us take you **Behind the Screens**.

There are several steps that are taken toward producing a new video game, the first one being the realization of an idea. Atari Games does not accept game ideas from outside the corporation, but rather relies on their experienced and imaginative staff of game designers to come up with the innovative games we see in the arcades. These designers may brainstorm for days, letting their imaginations run wild in an effort to come up with a viable game theme. It is not uncommon for the designers to then go off-site, to some remote and relaxing area, to brainstorm further and refine the game idea. This is when the real magic begins!

Designers, software engineers, and other available staff are assigned to the new project. It is the responsibility of the team, generally the game designer, to define, or story-board the game; recreating the game's visual appearance on paper with notes on game play also outlined.



Atari Game designers **Ed Logg**, **Dave Ralston**, and **Mike Hally** take a break between hits.

Mike Hally, creator of **Star Wars**, **Empire Strikes Back**, and more recently, **Road Runner**, claims that the designer must "play the game in his mind" to see how the game will flow. The designer must also consider the skills of both the average and expert players when developing a project. Mike Hally got around this problem

when designing **Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom** by offering three different levels of play for the novice, average, and expert gamer. "Historically," explained marketing director Mary Fujihara, "more games are geared toward the average and above-average players to keep these high-frequency players interested."

During the development of each new game, the designers will often experiment with several different characters or character ideas before settling on the final cast. In its infant stages, **Paperboy** featured "ducks in business suits" and "giant snails." But, according to David Ralston, **Paperboy** designer, these characters were removed because they were incongruous (perhaps too much brainstorming this time!) to the game's theme.

After the storyboarding process is complete, it is time to bring in the software engineers for programming. Programming a game is a considerable task in itself. Software engineers, such as Ed Logg (**Gauntlet** and **Gauntlet II**), are responsible for bringing the game to life on the screen. The software engineers will generate massive amounts of computer code before ever seeing an image on the screen. For instance, **Gauntlet** required 256K bytes of code for the graphics and another 728K bytes of program code!

The new game is reviewed throughout its development stages. The first test it must pass is an "in-house" review by the Atari Games (continued on page 5)



**Mary Fujihara**, Marketing Director at Atari Games, flashes a smile for the APA cameras in front of the company's Milpitas headquarters.



# OUR 'CADES

by Woody McCoy

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Like snowflakes and fingerprints, no two arcades are exactly the same. Although they may contain the same games, different environments make certain locations especially popular, affording a unique personality and style that attracts players and creates a competitive atmosphere. Our 'Cades is devoted to locating these outstanding game rooms; arcades that promote a positive image and have led players to higher scores.

In this issue, we spotlight **Captain Video**, a very successful game room based in Los Angeles, California. With an impressive list of community service activities and a nice selection of game titles, Captain Video has become one of the hottest spots in town. It is not unusual to occasionally find a Hollywood celebrity trying out a game inside the Captain's new base on Overland and Pico, and even less unusual to find champion players guiding machines to world record scores.

We send arcade expert and video game fanatic, Woody McCoy to Captain Video to check the place out and talk with local players. He filed the following report:

My mission was to search California for the best location to play video games. Not an easy task. With few clues to go on, instinct became my guide. It told me that Los Angeles was the place to go; a town with just about everything from Vanna White to doggie dress-up shops. It was there I searched.

I seemed lost for days (a normal occurrence on the L.A. freeway system), fuel was running low and so were my quarters, but I persisted. Then, as I rounded the corner of Overland and Pico near Westwood, the image of Captain Video hit me, or almost hit me as I dodged a car conveniently parked in the middle of the road.

After parking, I headed toward the establishment and the myriad of beeps and booms emanating from within. I hesitated as I walked through the doors. I could sense that this was no ordinary arcade. After I entered and surveyed my surroundings, I knew that this was the place I was looking for.

There were well over 50 games here, the perfect mix of old and new machines. I journeyed further into the arcade, exchanging glances with the other patrons as I went, until I saw what has to be every professional player's dream: stools. This meant comfort while playing; a nice touch that was being well received.

As I approached the middle of this electronic wonderland I got my eye on a row of pin games, the latest on the market. I noticed a guy racking up an impressive score on **High Speed** and decided to ask a few questions. He trapped the ball and told me his name was Jeff. He said that Captain Video had been around for over six years, but had only recently moved to its present location. He also commented on how well maintained the games were and, looking around, I could only agree. I thanked him for his time and he resumed play, making a clean shot to send the game into a frenzied multi-ball contest.

I felt very comfortable here. Even the atten-

dant on duty smiled as I exchanged my last pennies for more quarters. I glanced above him and saw that the walls were expertly painted and highlighted with neon fixtures. Even Captain Video himself was forever exalted in colorful neon.

After speaking with the attendant for some time, he pointed me to the trophy case which displayed a long and admirable list of community support. There were many plaques commemorating the youth groups that Captain Video owners Gary Gullette and Mike McClelland have sponsored over the years: little league, basketball, and soccer teams were each represented. In addition, Captain Video has helped a variety of fundraisers and church groups during its residency. Captain Video, its owners and staff, definitely provide a positive influence to the community!

I floated back out into the crowds of people, hopefully to get a few gaming tips from the obviously skilled players. I walked past a gal who was calmly exterminating **Robotrons**, and after seeing the death-in-the-eyes gaze that she was giving the game, decided not to go for the pick-up. Instead I came to a guy who was in the process of saving **Peaches the Princess** in **VS. Super Mario Bros.**

He wasn't too willing to give away any of his secrets, but he did tell me why he thought Captain Video was so popular.

"It's the games," he said bluntly. "And the people. When you come here you know you'll be able to play the best new games and make friends in the process. It's a great place!"

As I looked around I realized that he was right; this was a great place. I realized that my mission was accomplished and expressed a hearty sigh of relief. Work time was over. It was my turn to play. . .

## Behind the Screens

(continued from page 4)

staff and management. Graphics and other game features are altered as needed as the game designers and engineers collaborate to bring the game to its prototype status. To this point, only the Atari Games' staff has been permitted to play the game and offer opinions. Soon, however, it is time for the real test!

Next, Atari Games gathers players like yourself to form a "focus group" and play the game on-site. These players are recruited from the bay area (San Francisco) with a requirement that they play games at least once a week. The group is analyzed by the Atari Games' staff to see how quickly they will learn the game while the staff records the players' responses to the game.

If the results from the players are favorable, then the coin mechanisms and the software coin acceptance routines are integrated into the game, which is then released as a prototype for a field test at local arcades. For one or two weeks they analyze the players' reactions and take further statistics. "We want to see a learning curve over time," said Mary Fujihara. "We want longevity in the game, yet a steady income as well." This is a seemingly difficult task, yet the Atari Games' team has succeeded again and again with winner after winner.

With wide exposure during the field test, "bugs" (glitches in the programming that radically affect play) are occasionally found by alert players. Last minute touch-ups are made to remove these flaws and, if the game proves itself during the field test, it is offered to distributors, soon to make its way into your local arcade. And if the game fails the field test? Well, then it's back to the storyboard!

And here the process ends. But, soon enough, you can bet that the brainstorming will begin again and another Atari Games' hit will be in the makings!



LA's **Captain Video** arcade attracts players with its diversified selection of new games.



ATARI'S  
**CHAMPIONSHIP SPRINT**

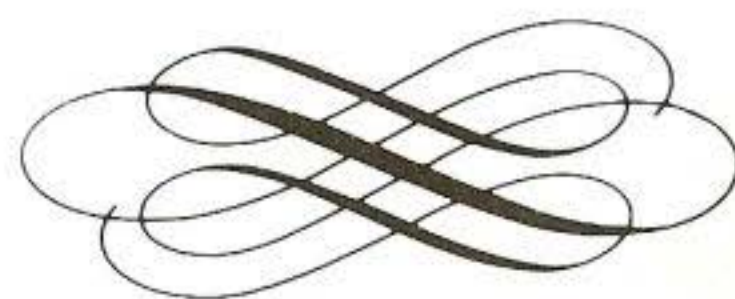
DOING THE BEST  
ONE BETTER.

**Championship Sprint** is an excellent addition to the **Sprint** family. Its high-resolution graphics and superior music and sound effects make it one of the most intense driving games around. So, get in on the fun! Test drive **Championship Sprint** at your local arcade, or wherever **Atari** games are played!

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**Nintendo's** reputation for producing only the very best video games has been reinforced even further with the release of **VS. Slalom**. Both **Coin-It** and **Nintendo** have done an excellent job of combining an exciting and fast-paced game with a highly original and interactive control board. **VS. Slalom** is video game fun at its best!





## BALLY/SENTE'S NIGHT STOCKER

GET READY FOR  
THE DRIVE OF YOUR LIFE. . .

**Bally/Sente**, the company founded by video game inventor Nolan Bushnell, has enjoyed a long string of popular hits. With an emphasis on audio enhancement, **Bally/Sente** has produced favorites such as **Gimme A Break**, **Mini-Golf**, and **Hat Trick**.

Something, however, has been missing. With the possible exception of their debut effort, **Snake Pit**, most of **Bally/Sente's** games have been 'mellow' and 'laidback.' No shooting or killing, just good video game entertainment.

Not any more.

**Bally/Sente** has taken a 180° turn with the release of their latest video game entry: **Night Stocker**.

Although it shares the same name as last year's cross-country driving excursion, **Stocker**, **Night Stocker** is more comparable to playing **Pole Position** during World War III.

**Night Stocker** takes place on an alien world inhabited by a fierce variety of airborne and land-based enemy vehicles. Phase one features a fast-paced journey across a pseudo three-dimensional landscape. While driving a car to avoid mines and pick up crystals with a claw mounted on the hood, you must defend your position using a separate hand-held gun. This unique combination of driving and shooting will undoubtedly challenge even the best players.

After successfully navigating the dangers of phase one, a more difficult level of play is reached. Enemy fortresses, which stand at the end of each round, are filled with robot guards which return fire in all directions! Here, another one of the game's exciting features can be used: an Uzi machine gun mode that allows you to fire a steady stream of bullets at your adversaries. This helpful feature really gives you a feeling of power!

Subsequent rounds introduce new enemy forces and increase the fortification of each landscape. Cars are lost when they sustain too much damage or when their energy shielding is depleted.

Don't pass up **Night Stocker**! It represents **Bally/Sente's** first foray into the smash-crash-pow-wow-boom-bang brand of gaming that they last attempted in their debut effort, **Snake Pit**. Sixteen different levels of play, as well as a combination driving/shooting play theme, make **Night Stocker** one of the most original and intense new games of the year! It's super!

## BALLY/MIDWAY'S SPECIAL FORCE PINBALL

THE NEXT TREND  
IN PINBALL

With the additional use of new high-technology advances, pinball games have been able to evolve into a very sophisticated form of electronic entertainment. The need for this recent change from the simple to complex is largely due to the proliferation of the video game and the visual appeal that video games possess. To compete, pinball has had to become more interactive, providing players with more strategies and risk incentives to hold interest. The introduction of multi-level and multi-ball play have given the pinball games of today enough excitement and variety to rival their video adversaries, with back-glass art and sound effects that add a whole new dimension.

An exciting example of this new breed of pinball is being released by **Bally/Midway** as part of their revolutionary **Next Trend** line of pin games. **Special Force**, **Bally's** latest entry, features fast-paced action in a hostage-rescue combat theme.

The playfield of **Special Force** follows the theme of the game, with a unique multi-ramped playfield that features jungle roads, hut-shaped thumper-bumpers, and a special helicopter funnel ramp.

At various intervals during play it is possible to have one or two balls captured or "taken hostage." By using rockets and bombs that are awarded for various skill shots, it is possible to command an attack to free the hostages. If the assault is successful, the game goes into thrilling multi-ball play, permitting bonus point scores of up to **2,000,000**. Indeed, one of the highest scoring incentives ever seen in a pin game.

Rockets and bombs also have other tactical uses, such as destroying enemy tanks (drop targets) without using the ball! This brings a whole new perspective to play, increasing the number of available strategies.

The sound accompaniment of **Special Force** is equally outstanding, with a wide range of realistic sound effects following the action. From the chirping of crickets to ear-splitting explosions, all the sound effects are rendered with distinguished clarity.

The backglass art helps reinforce the mood of the game by featuring a machine-gun-toting



**Special Force** commando as well as a terrorist foe. Helicopters, tanks, and explosions add color and excitement to this slick machine.

**Special Force** has all the features of classic pin games like **8 Ball Deluxe**, throws in a few new twists, and wraps it all together in a popular theme that lets you get the bad guys. **Special Force** pinball. . . Look for it at your local arcade and get in on **The Next Trend** excitement!

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Other new games to look for. . .  
Romstar has a winner called **Arkanoid**. It's a great throwback to the Atari classic: **Breakout**. . . **Capcom** has a great sequel to **Commando** called **Speed Rumbler**. . . **Bubble Bobble**, the latest from **Taito**, is getting exceptional reviews. . . **Premiere Technologies** has released a new pin titled **Genesis**. It features a mad doctor-monster theme. . . Check it out when it gets to your area.



# PLAYER PROFILE

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## DAVID PALMER

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In this issue of the **Top Score** newsletter we interview **David Palmer**, one of the year's premier players. David has been quite successful with his past endeavors, including this year's **Video Game Masters Tournament**, which featured over 1,500 participants playing nationwide. David had plenty of competition, yet he still managed to collect seven record scores (to be published in the 1987 edition of the **Guinness Book of World Records**), more than any other player. David Palmer also holds world records on several other games that were not in the tournament but are listed on the **Amusement Players Association's International Scoreboard**.

David is a specialist. His particular forte is first-person games; games in which the player has a realistic perspective of actually being inside a vehicle. Twenty-eight years old and a resident of Auburn, California, David has been playing video games for only four years, but, in that short time, he has been able to refine his skills into those of an expert.

We asked David to reflect on his success as a video game player and he gratefully accepted to give us all the details in the following interview. We learned that in striving to be the best, David has formed a special philosophy based on dedication and practice that has allowed him to reach the goals he sets.

**TOP SCORE: How did you get started in video games?**

**PALMER:** Although they had been out for several years, I didn't pay any attention to video games or imagine myself playing them. But then, in September of '82, the college I was attending got a **Tron** game in its cafeteria. I got up the nerve to give it a try and I got hooked.

Not long afterward I discovered **Battlezone** and immediately developed a great respect for the realistic first-person format of the game. This was the first game I mastered, and from here I branched out to other first-person games.

**TS: Why do you specialize in first-person games?**

**PALMER:** Unlike the majority of video games, the first-person games test and develop the same skills involved in real-life activities.

The sort of skills developed by mastering the third-person games (in which there's some ship or car on the screen that you remotely control) simply can't be related in any way to the real life piloting or driving of a vehicle.

**TS: So realism is important?**

**PALMER:** Of course. With real life vehicles you're always on the inside looking out, operating in three-dimensional space with only a limited perspective of what's going on around you. This is a completely different set up from the third-person games.



### DAVID PALMER VIDEO GAME MASTERS TOURNAMENT RESULTS

#### 1984 Video Game Masters Tournament (1985 Guinness Book of World Records)

Firefox (9000)	500,045
Tron	1,695,463

#### 1985 Video Game Masters Tournament (1986 Guinness Book of World Records)

Battlezone	10,000,000
Empire Strikes Back	1,345,049
Firefox (9000)	707,790
Red Baron	214,230
Star Rider	339,015
Star Wars	15,250,793
Tron	1,695,463*

\*Note: 1984 score

#### 1986 Video Game Masters Tournament (1987 Guinness Book of World Records)

Battlezone	10,000,000*
Empire Strikes Back	1,345,049*
Firefox (9000)	707,790*
Red Baron	214,230*
Star Rider	339,015*
Star Wars	31,660,614
Tron	1,695,463†

\*Note: 1985 Score

†Note: 1984 score

**TS: How did this year's tournament go for you?**

**PALMER:** I was certainly satisfied with what I achieved on **Star Wars**, hitting 31 million on the tournament setting of 6 shields with no bonus shields.

Next year I'd like to increase my present scores on **Red Baron** and **Star Rider**. Hopefully, I'll be able to locate these games during the competition.

**TS: To what do you attribute your success?**

**PALMER:** Several things. Not only a lot of hard work, but considerable expense; for me,

an average of about \$200 per arcade game.

Also, long and grueling games are sometimes required. I had to play **Battlezone** for 23 hours to attain the world record of 23 million, and I'm afraid that this is about as long as I can play a single game. I don't have the endurance to play for two or three days like some guys have. But, on the average, I spend about three hours a day working on the games.

**TS: Are your family and friends supportive of your efforts?**

**PALMER:** In general, yes. At least since I have achieved success and feel good about the games. When video games were relatively new to me, and I was struggling very hard without much success, I could be rather ill-humored at times.

**TS: I imagine many professional players can sympathize with that. What would you consider your greatest gaming achievement?**

**PALMER:** Hard to say. The games on which I have the highest scores in relation to other players' scores are **Red Baron** at 1.2 million, and **Star Rider** at 3 million (multi-credit play — not tournament settings).

On the other hand, **Battlezone** is the game that I feel I've come the closest to attaining perfection. In the **1985 Masters Tournament** I scored 10 million points without losing a single tank. Then again, my score on **Star Wars** for this year's tournament is the consummation of years of hard work.

**TS: What is your favorite arcade game and the one that has proven to be the most difficult?**

**PALMER:** Again, this is hard to say, but I think that **Star Rider** may be the answer to both of these questions.

I consider **Star Rider** to be the ultimate racing game. You race against a fixed number of opponents like in a real race (unlike **Pole Position** in which you keep encountering cars that are merely obstacles).

**TS: Besides that, what sets it apart from the dozens of other racing games?**

**PALMER:** The race in **Star Rider** is no ordinary race; it's one of savage combat, where you gain points by running your opponents into obstacles. "The Road Warrior" is my favorite movie, and **Star Rider** is the closest thing I've found to that kind of action.

**Star Rider** is a game you can never totally master and grow tired of. I've spent over \$400 on it, yet it still poses a challenge every time I play.

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"Now that I've saved the princess, what do I do with her?"

This question comes up frequently after players, who have labored for days and spent dozens of quarters, finally complete the 32 levels of **Super Mario Bros.** When you finish all 8 worlds (each with four regions) and successfully reach the game's goal, Princess Peaches, you are treated to a short poem, some nice music, and a whopping 100,000 point bonus for every remaining life (not a bad reward for such a homely looking princess). Then, in the middle of all this celebration, those haunting words, "Game Over" flash across the screen. And although at this point many think they've mastered the game, reaching the end of this unique adventure is really just the beginning.

This article will give you the framework on which to build a better score and refine playing techniques. Even though it's written for the advanced player, this **How to Master** segment will provide you beginners with some valuable information on beating **Super Mario Bros.** as well.

**Super Mario Bros.** is without a doubt one of the best games of the yer. By taking a variety of proven play concepts and adding a number of new twists, the folks at **Nintendo** have produced

an endless passageway until the timer ticks away. This round is actually fairly simple once you have the pattern memorized.

Starting at the bottom ledge, jump up to the top and run across the series of small gaps. Slow down to avoid any fire ropes, then drop to the middle platform to end the first part of the maze. Drop down to the bottom once again to begin the second part of the maze. Jump up the inclining row of bricks as you encounter them. Next, fall back to the bottom level once more and run. This will bring you face to face with the fifth dragon.

The second castle-maze, 7-4, is not quite as simple as the one before it. It too, is divided into two separate parts, with a subtle slip-up again sending Mario into a maddening loop of passageways.

The first section is easy enough, jump from the bottom to the middle, then from the middle to the top, fall back onto the middle platform and jump again to the top. The second half of the maze begins along the bottom. Avoid the fire rope and proceed to the middle and then the top levels. When you reach the top, jump backwards onto the upper platform at the extreme left. Once you've made contact with that

play levels (e.g. **Marble Madness**, **Crystal Castles**, **Paperboy**, etc.) demand the use of point pressing systems when acquiring higher scores.

Obtaining firepower is a necessity when working for world-class **Super Mario Bros.** scores. While the use of firepower against turtles, toadstools, and other nasties should, for the most part, be avoided, it does come in handy for exterminating plants and killing the dragons (worth 5,000 points apiece). Although working with firepower can be awkward, it definitely is an asset in the latter parts of the game.

#### SECRET VINES

Some of the other, more beneficial, objects that are hidden within each level include the secret beanstalks. These vines stretch upward and off the screen, taking Mario into clouds filled with coins. It is usually a good idea to make use of these vines, mainly because they contain more coins than the section of ground below. You can look for these secret boxes near the top row of bricks on worlds 2-1, 3-1, 4-2 (which will also warp you to world six), 5-2, and 6-2.

#### EXTRA MEN

There are three ways to earn extra men on

## STRATEGY SESSION

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HOW TO  
MASTER

VS. SUPER  
MARIO BROS.

yet another A-1 game.

Mastering **Super Mario Bros.** is not a simple task. The game requires split-second judgments, precise movements, and a good knowledge of each level's layout. Memorizing the locations of the secret objects (free men, bonus coins, etc.) is also necessary for higher scores. These basic skills can only be learned through practice and by watching other, more proficient players. By examining the strategies of others you can easily discover the position of most of the secret objects and study the best patterns through each world.

#### CASTLE MAZES

After familiarizing yourself with the fundamentals, you'll learn that the game is pretty straightforward. Three rounds, however, demand more than just quick hand-eye coordination. Worlds 5-4, 7-4, and 8-4 present unconventional, even bewildering, challenges that require good puzzle-solving abilities (another one of **Super Mario's** strong points). In addition to the usual dangers, these special castles represent abstract mazes which must be followed strictly if you are to reach the dragon that guards the end of every world.

5-4, the first castle-maze, has only one correct path; deviate from it and Mario is caught in

surface, stay at the top of the screen and exit through the bottom.

8-4, the final round of the game, is much different than the previous castle-mazes. Instead of requiring you to follow a preset pattern along the surface of the dungeon layout, finishing world 8-4 depends upon pulling down into the right pipes which extend above the floor. Pulling down the wrong pipe, however, still produces the same results: it sends Mario back to the beginning of the round.

While dodging the various nasties that litter the castle, make your way to the third pipe and pull down. Avoid the next three pipes and find the hidden coin box and go down the pipe. Skip two more pipes and pull down on top of the third. Once you resurface you'll meet the meanest dragon yet: an axe-throwing, fire-breathing monster who won't give up easily.

#### POINT PRESSING

Once you are able to finish the game on a regular basis you should work towards saving more men as well as special techniques for **point pressing**. Point pressing involves a number of strategies that increase the overall score before the 'per man' bonus (100,000 points for each remaining life) is awarded at the end of the game. Many titles that have a limited number of

**Super Mario Bros.:** by locating green mushrooms hidden inside invisible blocks, collecting a preset number of gold coins, or through the successful completion of a 'turtle run.'

Green mushrooms cannot be detected until after the special boxes they're inside of are hit from below. No clues are given to tell you where they are, exactly, but we'll let you know that they're somewhere in levels 1-1, 3-1, 5-1, and 7-1.

Coin bonuses are given for every 100, 150, 200, or 250 coins gathered; depending on how generous your local game-room owner is. Try to memorize the location of every coin box, especially the timed boxes that award multiple coins. This will insure not only more men, but a higher score as well.

'Turtle runs,' as they're called, are fairly simple to initiate, but are quite difficult to complete. Basically a 'turtle run' entails the disablement of a turtle or armadillo by knocking the nasty over on its back. Starting from the left, you must kick the creature to the right and follow it at high speed. Anything in the shell's path will be knocked off and an incremental number of points will be awarded. When a suffi-  
(continued on page 10)



## Strategy Session

(continued from page 9)

cient quantity of enemies have been slapped off, you will be given a free amn. The scoring pattern progresses like this: 400, 500, 800, 1000, 2000, 4000, 5000, 8000, 1UP (free man). The rounds with the best 'turtle runs' are: 1-1 (up to 5000 points), 1-2 (up to 2000 points), 2-1 (4000), 3-1 (8000 - \*note: you must miss the vine), 3-2 (two runs - 2000 and an extra man), 5-1 (three runs - 5000, 5000, and an extra man), 8-1 (two runs - 5000 and an extra man).

### FLAG BONUSES

Each level of **Super Mario Bros.** ends with a climatic jump onto a flag pole. Depending on the height of the leap, bonus points of 100, 400, 800, 2000, or 5000 are awarded.

Additional bonus points can be acquired by jumping to the flag pole at certain times. By landing on the pole with the last digit in the timer being six (e.g. 106, 226, etc.), you'll receive a short fireworks display. Each explosion is worth 500 points, with a grand total of 3000 points (six fireworks) awarded. Fireworks can also be collected by hitting the flag with a last digit of three (three fireworks - 1500 points) or one (one firework - 500 points).

The easiest way to get the 8000 bonus points from the flag (5000 for reaching the flag, 3000 for the six fireworks) is to use the 'run' button to sprint, from the highest point before the flag pole, when the last digit in the timer reaches 0 (slow timer) or 1 (fast timer).

### THE WRAP-AROUND TRICK

We're not exactly sure if the wrap-around trick was purposefully programmed into **Super Mario Bros.** by its designers, or if it's a flaw that was overseen during the game's testing stages. Regardless of why it's there, the wrap-around trick will easily increase your score by 400,000 points.

The wrap-around trick can only be accomplished during the last round of every world (1-4, 2-4, 3-4, etc.). The first step is to wait around the end of the level (near the dragon's lair) until the timer approaches zero (kill the dragon if you have firepower and wait near the hatchet). Be by the hatchet when the counter says two. At the moment the timer moves from two to one, jump. You'll land on the axe and finish the round with 000 time left. When the game initiates the timer bonus it will roll back to 999, giving you an added bonus of 50,000 points. Doing this on every one of the eight castle rounds will award a total of 400,000 extra points at the game's end.

### OTHER THINGS TO REMEMBER

When striving for world record scores on **Super Mario Bros.** there are several things you should remember: Point press whenever possible. Flying turtles can be worth up to 1200 points: knocking it out of the air (400), tipping it over with another jump (100), kicking it away (500), and shooting it if you have firepower (200). With practice, this and other techniques will become easy.

Other objects that award points to skilled players include bullets from cannons (200 points for hitting from above), platforms on pulleys (1000 points when they fall off), and increased points for kicking turtles when they prepare to flip upright (1000 points).

By making the most out of the techniques outlined in this article, you should be able to improve your scores on **Super Mario Bros.** The final results, however, are up to you. Practice, practice, practice.

### About the Author...

Eighteen year-old Danny Carranza, a resident of Culver City, California, has been playing video games for several years. Danny is an expert at many different types of games (including **Super Mario Bros.**) and currently holds the **Guinness Book** record of 151,870 on **Data East's Speed Buggy** (North track).

### Special Offer!

Now available, exclusively to readers of the **Top Score** newsletter, is an in-depth **How-to-Master** strategy booklet for **Nintendo's Super Mario Bros.** Everything is covered in this comprehensive look at one of the year's most popular games. Over a half a dozen of the world's best players have collaborated to bring you this informative collection of tips and tricks; many that have never been published before.

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## Player Profile

(continued from page 8)

**TS:** What would you like to see in the future for arcade games?

**PALMER:** More simulator-type games, of course, and more sophisticated ones. I think that home computer games hold the greatest promise (for simulator-type games), although it is an unfortunate fact that limitations in the power of microcomputers (as well as their controls) mean that these games can't be as ambitious as their coin-operated arcade counterparts.

**TS:** Is it true that you're getting a book published on game strategies?

**PALMER:** Yes. One of this year's most popular home computer games has been **Elite**, by **Firebird Software** of England. This is a first-person space combat and trading game of immense scope and complexity, and I have written a strategy book on the game which is in the process of being published.

David Palmer. Author, video game expert, and world record holder. Thank you for a very insightful interview. We wish you much continued success.

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# REMINDER

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(All Scores Effective 11/01/86)

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		VIDEO	
Arkanoid	812,180	Jace Clark	10/02/86
Berzerk (Fast)	91,070	Ron Bailey	03/14/84
Bubble, Bobble	621,300	Perry Rodgers	10/06/86
Cheyenne	319,000,000	Donn Nauert	01/27/85
Commando	835,700	Jeff Wakefield	06/28/86
Crystal Castles	891,221	Mark Alpiger	10/21/86
Defender	76,377,300	Burt Jennings	04/08/83
Elevator Action	143,450	G. Ben Carter	06/28/86
Galaga	2,278,190	Jim Vollandt	06/29/86
Gyruss	41,090,450	Anthony Fodrizio	03/22/84
Hang-On	40,715,030	Don NOvak	06/28/86
Hyper Sports	473,160	Mike McNear	10/08/84
Ikari Warriors	225,700	Bart Jacoby	09/16/86
Joust (New Chip)	115,910,850	Robert Bonney	04/07/84
Mario Bros.	3,481,550	Perry Rodgers	12/12/84
Mr. Do!	26,030,050	David Breckon	01/26/86
Ms. Pac-Man	874,530	Chris Ayra	06/30/85
Night Stocker	2,160,700	Gary Hatt	10/08/86
Pole Position	67,260 (213.84)	Les Lagier	06/29/85
Punch-Out!!	8,585,130	Chris Emery	06/29/85
Q*Bert	33,073,520	Rob Gerhardt	11/25/83
Road Runner	1,410,910	Matt Walker	09/07/86
Section Z	1,694,630	Stephen Wimmer	09/30/86
SiniStar	761,305	Chris Emery	11/23/83
Spy Hunter	9,512,590	Paul Dean	06/28/85
Star Wars	300,007,894	Robert Mruczek	01/20/84
Super Mario Bros.	2,229,350	Michael Perring	06/28/86
Tapper	9,068,625	Mike Ward	06/29/86
Time Pilot '84	463,300	Samantha Johanik	No Date
Track & Field	92,190	Phil Britt	02/01/84
TX - 1	277,400	Dave Palmer	10/02/84
		PINBALL	
Genesis	11,608,230	Perry Rodgers	10/04/86
High Speed	4,900,820	Dorn McWilliams	05/22/86
Hollywood Heat	27,819,360	Frank Campobasso	09/28/86
Pin-Bot	2,618,010	Steve Harris	10/26/86
Space Shuttle	9,877,660	Mike Wyman	01/11/86
8 Ball Deluxe	8,818,400	Chris Holland	08/14/83
		Hermosa Arcade	Hermosa Beach, CA
		Putt Putt Golf & Games	Gastonia, NC
		Hermosa Arcade	Hermosa Beach, CA
		Gold Mine	Austin, TX
		Bally's Aladdin's Castle	Loveland, CO
		Mark's Place	Louisville, KY
		Outer Limits	Durham, NC
		Bally's Aladdin's Castle	Fremont, NE
		Bally's Aladdin's Castle	La Verue, CA
		Video Circus	Stratford, CT
		Bally's Aladdin's Castle	Wichita, KS
		Bally's Aladdin's Castle	Houston, TX
		7-11	Atlanta, GA
		Circle K	Seattle, WA
		Family Fun Fiar	San Luis Obispo, CA
		Tom's Arcade	London, Ontario
		Johnny Zee's Family Fun	Victoria, B.C.
		Flying Dutchman	Monrovia, CA
		Unknown	San Jose, CA
		Johnny Zee's Family Fun	Victoria, B.C.
		Bim's Place	Lloydminster, Alberta
		Unknown	Memphis, TN
		Le Fun	Austin, TX
		Saratoga	Winnipeg, Manitoba
		Huish Family Fun	Los Angeles, CA
		Fascination	New York, NY
		Bally's Aladdin's Castle	San Francisco, CA
		Bally's Aladdin's Castle	Madison, WI
		Bally's Aladdin's Castle	Des Moines, IA
		Captain Video	Los Angeles, CA
		Scandia	Sacramento, CA

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- ★ Ace reporter Woody McCoy will take you on a search for the "World's Largest Arcade". . .
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